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ABSTRACT

This report presents retention rates of the 1964 through 1969 Hofstra freshman classes 5 years after entry. Data indicates: (1) Hofstra's persistence rate for the 1966 freshmen was comparable to the national retention rate. (2) There has been a downward trend in Hofstra's persistence rate as demonstrated by the figures for the 1964 throught 1969 entering classes. (3) There has been a concurrent downward trend in Hofstra's graduation rates for the 1964 through 1967 entering classes. (4) There has been a sharp downward trend in the retention rates of the student with GPA's of 2.00 or better who entered Hofstra between 1964 and 1969. (5) The percentage of students dropped for academic reasons declined steadily for the six classes. (6) The percentage of students who withdrew voluntarily with less than a 2.00 GPA also decreased, but the decline was not steady or as great as that of the academic drops. (7) Women who entered Hofstra between 1964 and 1967 consistently had higher graduation and persistence rates than men. (8) Women who entered Hofstra between 1964 and 1967 and earned GPA's of 2.00 or better withdrew at a higher rate than men in the same category, while men were often dropped for poor scholarship or withdrew with low GPA's. Additional findings are included. (MJM)

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CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY

A Longitudinal Study of the Status of Hofstra Freshman Classes Five Years After Entry

Marie McDermott and Pauline Lichtenstein

The analyses presented in this report were based on data from the recently completed CSHE Student Data Bank. An earlier report based on this data was concerned with probabilities of success at Hofstra among the 1964-67 freshman classes given their high school deciles and SAT scores. The analyses contained in that report were geared toward establishing criteria for admission to Hofstra.

This report presents retention rates of the 1964 through 1969 Hofstra freshman classes five years after entry. The 1969 freshman class was the most recent class which we were able to include in the data analyses since June 1974 was five years after entry for that class. The 1964-67 freshmen were analyzed by sex and by date of departure, but the 1968-69 freshmen were analyzed only by status after five years. After completion of the data analyses for the 1964-67 classes, it seemed that a trend in Hofstra's persistence rates was emerging. The data, however, were not conclusive. Since status five years after entry was the main variable being studied, data on this variable were collected for the 1968 and 1969 freshmen. It was then possible to examine the trend using the most recent classes possible.

The students were followed for five years because the literature (Eckland, 1964; Max, 1968; Irvine, 1965) indicates that the assumption that four years is the "normal" span of time spent in attaining a degree is not tenable. The results concerning Hofstra students strongly support that contention as demonstrated later in the report (see Table 1).

The first variable analyzed was status. Table 1 presents the persistence and withdrawal rates of the six freshman classes in such a format that one can observe overall trends.

Astin (1972) recently reported the results of a four-year longitudinal study of 51,721 freshmen who enrolled in 217 two-year and four-year institutions across the country in 1966. He found that 58% of the freshmen from the four-year colleges persisted (graduated or were still enrolled) at the original college of entry four years later. Hofstra's figure for 1966 freshman after five years was 60%. There has been no more recent information available on nation-wide persistence rates since Astin's report.

Although Hofstra's 1966 persistence rate compared favorably to the national rate, our four-year graduation rate was lower. Astin (1972) reported a 47% four-year graduation rate while our rate was 35% for the 1966 freshman class. Our five year rate, however, jumped to 53% for the same class. This result suggests that Hofstra students may take longer to graduate than the national sample since our persistence rate became comparable (60%) to the rate reported by Astin.

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Table 1

Persistence and Withdrawal Rates of
Freshman Classes Five Years After Entry

Status	Year of Entry 1964 (N=792) %	1965 (N=883) %	1966 (N=830) %	1967 (N=868) %	1968 (N=1101) %	1969 (N=1186) %
Persisted five years	62	66	60	56	53	53
Graduated in 4 years	37	46	35	38		
Graduated in 5 years	58	58	53	53		
Enrolled after 5 years	4	7	7	3		
Withdrawn (Total voluntary)	25	19	27	35	38	42
GPA=2.00 or better	11	12	14	21	25	33
GPA under 2.00	12	6	10	11	11	7
GPA unavailable	2	1	3	3	2	2
Dropped for poor scholarship	13	16	13	9	9	5

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Earlier in this report the statement was made that the data on Hofstra students strongly support claims in the literature that the students should be followed-up for five years rather than the usual four years. The range of percentages of students from the 1964 through the 1967 freshman classes who graduated in five years rather than the usual four-year span was from 12% to 21% of the classes. Another 3% to 7% of the entering classes were still in attendance after five years. Thus, a category called "graduated within 5 years" would represent about 95% of the persistors in the freshman class. The large number of commuting students at Hofstra could possibly have contributed to this result.

The data in Table 1 suggests a substantial downward trend in Hofstra's holding power. While only 38% of the 1964 freshman class withdrew over five years, by 1969 the rate of withdrawal for that entering class had increased to 47% over the same period of time. The question is, how much of this decline is peculiar to Hofstra and how much is due to changing students attitudes toward college and a general increase in transfer rates.

Similar to the trend in the persistence rates, the trend in the Hofstra graduation rates appears to the downward.

A recent report received from Pennsylvania State University (1973) showed that their retention rates have suffered a similar decline. Although one dissimilar (state university) institution's results cannot be generalized to Hofstra's situtation, other recent reports have indicated that Hofstra's problem is not unique (Lucas, 1973; CRC Center Notes, 1972). In fact, in a report done in 1972 by the College Research Center (CRC) it was noted that there has been an increase in inter-institutional mobility in the past few years. This may be partially due to the fact that transferring has become easier for students and more accepted by colleges.

Along with this downward trend in Hofstra's retention rate, i.e. upward trend in withdrawal rates, there appears to be a sharp upward trend in the withdrawal rates of students performing satisfactorily. The increase in the percentage of students who withdrew from Hofstra with a GPA of 2.00 or better from the 1964 to the 1969 freshman classes was from 11% of the 1964 class to 33% of the 1969 class.

A recent cross-sectional study of Thorne (1973) appears to confirm the downward trend in our holding power of satisfactory students. Thorne reported "an increase of Hofstra students choosing to transfer to other (mainly public) institutions." The consistency of our findings with his results rests on the assumption that a larger percentage of students with satisfactory GPA's transfer to other schools than those with low GPA's. This is a reasonable assumption considering what is known about drop-outs.

This phenomenon is also apparently not unique to Hofstra. It was reported in the CRC (1972) study that many of the withdrawn students had better academic credentials than many of the the remaining students.

It could be hypothesized that some of the increase in withdrawal rates of the satisfactory students may be due to the fact that the grades of Hofstra students have been steadily increasing over the years. In 1965, 49% of the grades

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awarded to day students were A's or B's, while in 1973, 63% of the grades awarded were A's or B's. Grades inflation also seems to be nation wide. An article in the Chronicle of Higher Education (October 7, 1974) reported on a survey of 197 colleges and universities. The survey indicated that the total increase in GPA was .404 (or about half a letter grade) between 1960 and 1973.

Inflated grading practices, however, does not appear to explain our results, i.e., the increased rate of withdrawal of Hofstra students with GPA's of 2.00 or better. In 1965, 88% of the grades awarded to day students were A's, B's, or C's and in 1973 the percentage remained 88%. In addition, for the groups of freshmen studied in this report, the percentages of the 1964 through 1967 classes with final cum GPA's of 2.00 or better were 74%, 75%, 72% and 76% respectively. The percentages withdrawn from these classes with GPA's of 2.00 or better, however, were 11%, 12%, 14%, and 21%, respectively. Comparable data were not available for the 1968 and 1969 classes.

Although the students with GPA's of 2.00 and above have been leaving Hofstra at an increasing rate, the percentage of students dropped for academic reasons has declined from 13% of the 1964 class to 5% of the 1969 class. The percentage of students with less than a 2.00 GPA who withdrew voluntarily has also decreased but the decline has not been steady or as great.

The results of the present study emphasize the need to initiate programs specifically designed to relieve Hofstra's retention problem rather than focusing largely on the recruitment of new students. Since it appears to be the satisfactory students whose rate of withdrawal has increased at an alarming pace, programs which include counseling and close contact with these students are particularly important.

The rest of this report will be concerned with the consistent findings for the four freshman classes rather than the analysis of trends. Data on the 1968 and 1969 freshman classes were not available for these tables.

The second variable included in the study was sex. Table 2 presents the persistence and withdrawal rates of the four (1964-1967) classes by sex. The data shown in this table indicates that females at Hofstra consistently had higher graduation (62%* versus 51%*) and persistence rates (65%* versus 58%*) than males. Astin's (1972) findings indicate that females graduate at a higher rate, but that men persist at a higher rate. As noted above, Astin's sample was similar to ours in time of entry. These conflicts may be due to time, methodology or institutional differences. According to Summerskill (1962), who did a very comprehensive review of the literature up to the early 1960's, men and women persisted at that time at similar rates but withdrew for different reasons. Generally, men dropped out for academic reasons, while women withdrew for family responsibilities.

The results also indicate that women at Hofstra with GPA's of 2.00 or better withdrew at a higher rate than men in the same category while men were more often dropped for poor scholarship or withdrew with low GPA's. The range of percentages of women who withdrew with GPA's of 2.00 or better was 15% to 25% while the range for men was 7% to 17%. The range of percentages of women who dropped for poor scholarship or withdrew with less than 2.00 GPA's was 11% to 18% while the range for men was 27% to 30%.

*Based on all four years of data combined.

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Table 2

Persistence and Withdrawal Rates of the 1964 through 1967 Freshman Classes by Sex Five Years After Entry

Status	Females Year of Entry 1964 (N=344) %	1965 (N=354) %	1966 (N=335) %	1967 (N=382) %
Persisted Five Years	65	70	66	60
Graduated in 4 years	49	56	47	48
Graduated in 5 years	63	66	62	58
Enrolled after 5 years	2	4	4	2
Withdrawn (Total voluntary)	27	22	27	35
GPA=2.00 or better	15	17	18	25
GPA under 2.00	10	5	6	6
GPA unavailable	2	-	3	4
Dropped for poor scholarship	8	8	7	5

Status	Males Year of Entry 1964 (N=448) %	1965 (N=529) %	1966 (N=495) %	1967 (N=486) %
Persisted Five Years	61	62	56	53
Graduated in 4 years	28	40	27	30
Graduated in 5 years	55	53	47	50
Enrolled after 5 years	6	9	9	3
Withdrawn (Total voluntary)	22	16	27	34
GPA=2.00 or better	7	8	12	17
GPA under 2.00	13	7	12	14
GPA unavailable	2	1	3	3
Dropped for poor scholarship	17	22	17	13

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The data shown in Table 2 also indicate that males consistenly took longer to graduate than females. This finding agrees with Irvine's (1965) statement, based on an eight year follow-up study at the University of Georgia, that women tend to graduate "on time" (in four years) more often than men, if they graduate at all. Astin's (1972) data verifies that statement. He showed a 45% male four-year graduation rate and another 16% still in attendance; a 49% female four-year graduation rate and only 7% still in attendance. The Hofstra data show a 31%* male four-year graduation rate and another 27%* still in attendance; a 50%* four-year female graduation rate and only 15%* still in attendance. It may be that the recent elimination of the draft and college draft exemption status has affected this variable. We have not been able to investigate this possibility since data by sex were not available for the 1968-69 classes.

The third variable studied was time of departure. Table 3 presents withdrawal rates for each class (1964-1967) by number of years after entry. Similar data was not available for the 1968 and 1969 freshmen. The four tables in Appendix A present all data in detail by class for the 1964-1967 entering freshmen.

The results shown in this table indicate that for all the classes, students who withdrew tended to leave early. Yuker, Lichtenstein, and Witheiler (1972) did a study of the 1971 voluntrary withdrawers from the total Hofstra full-time day student body and concluded that greater proportions of lower classmen withdrew. In the present study, the largest percentage of "poor" students (Academic drops and Withdrawals with less than 2.00 GPA) consistently left before their sophomore year. The satisfactory students left almost as frequently during or at the end of their sophomore year as they did before sophomore year. In this group, the largest percentage of withdrawers were still lower classmen. It would seem likely that most of these satisfactory students transferred to other schools.

In summary, the purpose of the present study was to show the status of of the 1964 through 1967 freshmen, by sex, and by date of departure, five years after entry. Additional data on the status of the 1968 and 1969 freshmen were cited to verify an emerging downward trend in Hofstra's persistence rates.

The following conclusions seem warranted on the basis of the data presented in the report:

1. Hofstra's persistence rate for the 1966 freshmen was comparable to the national rate as presented by Astin (1972).

2. There has been a downward trend in Hofstra's persistence rate as demonstrated by the figures for the 1964 through 1969 entering classes.

3. There has been a concurrent downward trend in Hofstra's graduation rates for the 1964 through 1967 entering classes. Similar data were unavailable for the 1968 and 1969 classes.

4. There has been a sharp downward trend in our retention rates of the students with GPA's of 2.00 or better who entered Hofstra between 1964 and 1969.

5. The percentage of students dropped for academic reasons declined steadily for the six classes.

6. The percentage of students who withdrew voluntarily with less

*Based on all four years of data combined

Table 3

Withdrawal Rates of the 1964 through 1967 Freshman Classes by Time of Departure

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Time of Departure	Year of Entry 1964 (N=792) %	1965 (N=883) %	1966 (N=830) %	1967 (N=868) %
Not in Attendance After 1st Year				
Dropped for poor scholarship	7	8	8	5
W/D, 2.0 or better	4	4	5	6
W/D, under 2.0	5	3	3	5
Total	16	15	16	16
Not in Attendance After 2nd Year				
Dropped for poor scholarship	3	4	2	2
W/D, 2.0 or better	3	5	4	5
W/D, under 2.0	2	2	3	2
Total	8	11	9	9
Not in Attendance After 3rd Year				
Dropped for poor scholarship	2	2	2	1
W/D, 2.0 or better	2	1	3	5
W/D, under 2.0	2	1	1	2
Total	6	4	6	8
Not in Attendance After 4th Year				
Dropped for poor scholarship	-	2	1	1
W/D, 2.0 or better	1	2	2	3
W/D, under 2.0	2	-	2	1
Total	3	4	5	5
Not in Attendance After 5th Year				
Dropped for poor scholarship	1	-	-	-
W/D, 2.0 or better	1	-	-	2
W/D, under 2.0	1	-	1	1
Total	3	0	1	3
GPA unavailable	2	-	3	3
Total	38	34	40	44

than a 2.00 GPA also decreased but the decline was not steady or as great as that of the academic drops.

7. Women who entered Hofstra between 1964 and 1967 consistently had higher graduation and persistence rates than men.

8. Women who entered Hofstra between 1964 and 1967 and earned GPA's of 2.00 or better withdrew at a higher rate than men in the same category while men were more often dropped for poor scholarship or withdrew with low GPA's.

9. Males consistently took longer to graduate than females.

10. Hofstra students appear to take longer to graduate than the national sample.

11. Most students who withdrew left before their sophomore year.

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Appendix A
September 1964 Freshman Class

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		Male (N=448)		Female (N=344)		Total (N=792)	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Graduated within 4 years		126	28	168	49	294	37
Graduated in 5 years		120	27	49	14	169	21
Total Graduated		246	55	217	63	463	58
In Attendance After 5 Years		28	6	6	2	34	4
Dropped for Poor Scholarship							
	1965	42	9	13	5	55	7
	1966	15	3	7	2	22	3
	1967	13	3	5	1	18	2
	1968	2	1	1	-	3	-
	1969	3	1	1	-	4	1
Total		75	17	27	8	102	13
Withdrawn							
GPA = 2.0 or better	2/65	1	-	6	2	7	1
	9/65	11	2	16	5	27	3
	2/66	2	1	8	2	10	1
	9/66	5	1	8	2	13	2
	2/67	-	-	2	1	2	-
	9/67	7	2	7	2	14	2
	2/68	-	-	1	-	1	-
	9/68	3	1	-	-	4	1
	2/69	1	-	1	-	2	-
	9/69	1	-	4	1	4	1
Total		31	7	53	15	84	11
Withdrawn							
GPA less than 2.0	2/65	9	2	3	1	12	1
	9/65	17	4	14	4	31	4
	2/66	7	2	-	-	7	1
	9/66	5	1	4	1	9	1
	2/67	6	1	5	2	11	1
	9/67	4	1	3	1	7	1
	2/68	1	-	-	-	1	-
	9/68	8	2	4	1	12	2
	2/69	3	1	1	-	4	1
	9/69	-	-	2	-	2	-
Total		60	13	36	10	96	12
Withdrawn No GPA		8	2	5	2	13	2
Total		448	100	344	100	792	100

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September 1965 Freshman Class

		Male (N=529)		Female (N=354)		Total (N=883)	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Graduated within 4 years		211	39	196	55	407	46
Graduated in 5 years		72	14	38	11	110	12
Total		283	53	234	66	517	59
In Attendance After 5 years		46	9	14	4	60	7
Dropped for Poor Scholarship							
	1966	55	10	11	3	66	8
	1967	27	5	10	3	37	4
	1968	15	3	7	2	22	2
	1969	16	3	-	-	16	2
	1970	3	1	-	-	3	-
Total		116	22	28	8	144	16
Withdrawn							
GPA = 2.0 or better	2/66	1	-	6	2	7	1
	9/66	11	2	12	3	23	3
	2/67	4	1	5	2	9	1
	9/67	11	2	18	5	29	4
	2/68	2	-	2	1	4	-
	9/68	3	1	7	2	10	1
	2/69	5	1	1	-	6	1
	9/69	6	1	4	1	10	1
	2/70	1	-	3	1	4	-
	9/70	1	-	1	-	2	-
Total		45	8	59	17	104	12
Withdrawn							
GPA less than 2.0	2/66	5	1	3	1	8	1
	9/66	9	2	3	1	12	2
	2/67	7	1	4	1	11	1
	9/67	3	1	3	1	6	1
	2/68	3	1	-	-	3	-
	9/68	5	1	3	1	8	1
	2/69	1	-	1	-	2	-
	9/69	1	-	2	-	3	-
	2/70	2	-	-	-	2	-
	9/70	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total		36	7	19	5	55	6
Withdrawn No GPA		3	1	-	-	3	-
Total		529	100	354	100	883	100

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September 1966 Freshman Class

		Male (N=495)		Female (N=335)		Total (N=830)	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Graduated within 4 years		134	27	158	47	292	35
Graduated in 5 years		100	20	48	15	148	18
Total Graduated		234	47	206	62	440	53
In Attendance After 5 years		44	9	15	4	59	7
Dropped For Poor Scholarship							
	1967	52	11	15	5	67	8
	1968	16	3	4	1	20	2
	1969	10	2	3	1	13	2
	1970	2	-	1	-	3	1
	1971	2	-	-	-	2	-
Total		82	16	23	7	105	13
Withdrawn GPA = 2.0 or better	2/67	3	1	4	1	7	1
	9/67	13	3	18	5	33	4
	2/68	4	1	6	2	10	1
	9/68	11	2	18	5	29	3
	2/69	2	-	6	2	8	1
	9/69	10	2	4	1	14	2
	2/70	2	-	3	1	5	1
	9/70	9	2	2	1	11	1
	2/71	3	1	-	-	3	-
	9/71	1	-	-	-	1	-
Total		60	12	61	18	121	14
Withdrawn GPA less than 2.0	2/67	7	1	2	1	9	1
	9/67	13	3	7	2	19	2
	2/68	5	1	1	-	6	1
	9/68	14	3	5	1	19	2
	2/69	2	-	-	-	2	-
	9/69	10	2	2	1	12	1
	2/70	3	1	-	-	3	1
	9/70	3	1	1	-	4	1
	2/71	3	1	-	-	3	-
	9/71	2	-	2	1	4	1
		62	13	20	6	82	10
Withdrawn No GPA		13	3	11	3	24	3
Total		495	100	335	100	830	100

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September 1967 Freshman Class

		Male (N=486)		Female (N=382)		Total (N=868)	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Graduated within 4 years		145	30	184	48	329	38
Graduated in 5 years		95	20	37	10	132	15
Total Graduated		240	50	221	58	461	53
In Attendance After 5 years		17	3	7	2	24	3
Dropped for Poor Scholarship							
	1968	38	8	11	3	49	5
	1969	11	2	3	1	14	2
	1970	7	2	4	1	11	1
	1971	5	1	1	-	6	1
	1972	1	-	-	-	1	-
Total		62	13	19	5	81	9
Withdrawn							
GPA = 2.0 or better	2/68	2	-	6	2	8	1
	9/68	26	5	21	5	47	5
	2/69	3	1	8	2	11	1
	9/69	14	3	20	5	34	4
	2/70	7	2	15	4	22	3
	9/70	9	2	11	3	20	2
	2/71	2	-	4	1	6	1
	9/71	11	2	7	2	18	2
	2/72	7	1	1	-	8	1
	9/72	3	1	3	1	6	1
Total		84	17	96	25	180	21
Withdrawn							
GPA less than 2.0	2/68	8	2	3	1	11	1
	9/68	30	5	9	2	39	4
	2/69	3	1	5	1	8	1
	9/69	4	1	-	-	4	1
	2/70	6	1	4	1	10	1
	9/70	4	1	1	-	5	1
	2/71	3	1	1	-	4	-
	9/71	3	1	2	1	5	1
	2/72	-	-	-	-	-	-
	9/72	7	1	-	-	7	1
Total		68	14	25	6	93	11
Withdrawn No GPA		15	3	14	4	29	3
Total		486	100	382	100	868	100